REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT ON PROTECTION AGAINST VIOLENCE AND DISCRIMINATION BASED ON SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY WITH FOCUS ON PRACTICES OF SO-CALLED »CONVERSION THERAPY«

State: Slovenia

Organisation: Association Legebitra (NGO)

REGULATION OF PSYCHOTHERAPY IN SLOVENIA

In Slovenia there has been very little public discussion on the theme of conversion therapy. Lately some media have reported the news of countries in EU banning conversion therapy. Otherwise the most reporting was on the theme of passing a law on psychotherapy which still has not been passed.

Considering that in the state of Slovenia the area of psychotherapy is not regulated by law there are no legal consequences for malpractice unlesss if the indiviudal decides to start a lawsuit against the psychotherapist on their own expenses.

So far the profession of a psychotherapyst can be done by people who are not qualified and educated. The proffession is not registered and there is no standards for what it means to be a qualified psychotherapist. There are certain associations amongst different professions (psychology, social work, different psychotherapy approaches…) but a person has to be a member of this association for the ethnical codes to apply. The possibility of complaint also depends on the form of employment a person who performs psychotherapy has. In practice that means if a person is self employed and is not a member of a proffessional association, little can be done.

Slovenia has an umbrella association that combines 10 proffessional associtations from the field of psychotherapy. They are all committed to ethical and proffesional standards od European association of psychotherapy (EAP). But as said, a person performing a psychoterapy has to be a member of one of the associations.

CONVERSION THERAPY IN SLOVENIA

So far, at Legebitra we have been familiar with 3 cases of people who have been treated for their homosexuality. The state of Slovenia offers no information and no effort to inform, increase the knowledge of practices, we also have no data except some personal experiences shared within the counseling programme on Legebitra.

Considering that psychotherapy is not regulated by state law, our state does none of the things questioned in the call for input. The ethical codes different proffesions are comitted to all expose the principle of respecting human rights, some of them explicit the personal circumstance of sexual orientation.

In general, conversion therapy is not ethical and is unprofessional due to the fact that homosexuality in itself is not a mental-health problem. That does not apply to gender identity where transgender persons in our country are still diagnosed with a mental-healt illness if they decide to apply for hormones and/or surgery and/or change their identification documents (gender markers).

If someone is treated with conversion therapy and if the therapyst is a member of an assoccitation, the person can complain to the association. If a conversion therapy is performed by a clinical psychologist, it is also possible to complain to the Chamber of clinical psychologists.

Some information can be found on religious sights (Roman catholic, Jehovah's witnesses) where they write about homosexuality as being a disease that can be treated and they advocate for the right of homosexuality being treated for free in the public health care system. We know that people are being treated but at the same time we have no information about their treatment process as such. We assume that people are either too affected by this and are afraid or ashamed to report this to someone.

Basically, in our state the topic of conversion therapy has not been sistematically addressed. Therefore we have very little and insufficient information. At Legebitra we are planing to adress this topic in the next year with some public discussion and a systematic overview of the topic.